

Changes of the Heart

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By Kyle Emmerson

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It's late. Oh Gods it's late. I don't want this to happen now. Not now, in the middle of the night. I wanted it to happen during the day.

But it's not happening like that. And now I sit here, preparing for the worst. I forget who told me that. Always prepare for the worst, and the best will happen.

But as it is, I sit here, in bed next to Ranma... My husband.

And I'm in labour.

It didn't take much to wake him up. I shook him a little first, but after goading no response, I crammed my elbow into his side.

Don't get me wrong, I don't hurt him on a regular basis! At least, not anymore. I wouldn't be doing this to him if I didn't already know he could take it.

It's funny. The man has endurance the likes nobody has ever seen, fine hones martial artist skills. Enough strength to toss a bulldozer down the street... And he won't even wake up when elbowed in the side.

So I just said two words. 'It's time.'

I've never seen Ranma move so fast. He was up, and halfway out the door to the hospital when he remembered the most important thing. Me.

On our way down the stairs, Ranma made a stop by Kodachi's room. I had wanted her to be there for the birth of my child. After all she'd been through, it was the least we could do.

She was already awake apparently. I didn't dare wake my father up, knowing full well of the help he would bring to the situation, which is to say, none. Sure, he would be angry in the morning, but he would forgive us.

And now, we're out the door. One of the perks of living with Kodachi was the car. Before, Ranma and I had to walk everywhere we went, but as a gift, Kodachi bought us the car.

Actually no. It was her car, even if she refused to admit it. She drove it, while Ranma and I walked. But this night, it was imperative that we drive.

And then Kodachi was at the wheel, and Ranma was in the back seat, going through the breathing exercises with me.

Hee hee hee hoo. Hee hee hee hoo. It's ridiculous, really. Like breathing in a different way was going to ease the pain. But I suppose it made Ranma feel more helpful. More comfortable with what was about to happen.

I remember the entire courting ritual the both of us went through years ago. I think I was the first to admit it to myself that I loved him.

It was actually at Jusendo when I found he cared for me. I found I cared for him before that. But the problem with real life, is that there are always complications. At that time, the complication was a winged kid-turned-adult named Saffron.

Oh, and did I mention I was turned into a doll? No, not the time I switched bodies with a haunted doll, this time was different. I was the doll. All the water in my body had dissipated, and I was beginning to die.

If it weren't for Ranma, I would have. It was that simple. He turned the dragon tap with his Hiryu Gyoten Ha, and we were both encased in ice-cold water.

And he was female, and I was human again. I guess you could call it an aftereffect of the dehydration, but I couldn't move for several moments. In fact, I thought I was dead until I managed to reach up and stroke his face.

And then we came home, and then there was the wedding. And then there wasn't. The failed wedding is another story altogether, but what happened the next day was a harsh reminder of reality.

If I ever once truly hated someone. Anyone, it was on that day. I

suppose I shouldn't think that way about the dead, but my anger was blinding me at the time.

It was so sudden. One minute, I was running to school with Ranma, and the next minute, we're both on the school grounds, being attacked by K--... By Tatewaki.

Apparently I had taken him off-guard when I tried to disarm him. I couldn't believe he brought his katana to school. It was bad enough that he brought it to the wedding, but the school?

Trying to disarm him had been a mistake. I cried out in pain and he turned around. He looked at me and saw the cut wound on my arm, and automatically assumed the worse.

He assumed Ranma had done it.

And then he attacked Ranma.

I suppose it's not completely his fault. Sometimes I blame myself for it, and I know Ranma blames himself. He should have been able to block it more effectively. But theres only so much one can do to defend himself against cold steel, when all you have is flesh protecting you.

And then it happened. Tatewaki had plunged the sword into his stomach. Ranma Saotome, the man who had fought a god and lived. Ranma Saotome, who rescued me from the Yamata no Orochi at Ryugenzawa. Ranma Saotome, who had successfully received the cure for the curse-locking ladle, had been stabbed in the gut.

And then he fell into the pool.

I don't know what possessed me to jump in after him. I knew I couldn't swim, and my arm hurt like you wouldn't believe, but I dove in after him.

And I managed to pull him to the surface.

I pulled him onto the concrete and checked his pulse. It was there, but faint. He wasn't even breathing.

I was almost certain he was going to die.

I did the only thing I could do. The thing I had learned from a special class I had once taken at the hospital.

I gave Ranma Saotome mouth-to-mouth resuscitation.

I ripped off his shirt as fast as I could. I briefly noticed that he was a she, but that didn't matter.

Yuka was staring at us horrifically. She took the class with me, she would know what to do. I called her over, and she held Ranma's head still, lifting the front of her jaw up so as to allow free access to her airway, she kept it still.

I mapped my fingers on his--her chest. Right where the rib bones meet, and then placed the heel of my hand between her breasts, just above where I had mapped my fingers, and compressed.

One. Two. Three. Four. Five.

One. Two. Three. Four. Ten.

One. Two. Three. Four. Fifteen.

Switch positions. I pinched her nose and clamped my mouth over hers.

I blew. One. Two. Three. Four.

No success. I had to try again. I knew I did. Even though I recalled the statistics.

Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation only has a ten percent success rate.

And so I went through the motions again. Mapping. Compressing. Breathing.

And then I got a reaction.

She coughed, and vomited water.

And all I could do was cry.

She remained silent for a long time, until the ambulance arrived. The paramedic confirmed my hopes. Ranma would live, and then we went into the ambulance together.

I still remember what he said to me. 'I feel like a Gorilla was pounding on my chest.'

And I laughed. I laughed as I cried, and then I hugged him.

And he hugged me back.

And then I looked at him, my eyes meeting his. Hers, actually.

And we shared our first kiss. I didn't care that he was a girl at the time. He was a man underneath. He was a man the whole way.

Ranma Saotome was a man who I loved.

Of course, that didn't stop the paramedic in the back with us from giving us strange looks.

The next day, Ranma was released from the hospital, and three days later, we heard the news.

Ranma was still somewhat weak when we found out. It was actually me that found out. At the school. Nabiki had come to the class looking rather sombre, and attracted my attention.

And then she told me.

Tatewaki Kuno was dead. He had committed Seppuku the night before.

And it wasn't long before I had regretted every bad thing I had said about him in the past few days before that.

Nabiki was hit harder than I was. I found out that she truly had cared for him, not just as a business associate, but truly CARED.

And then I saw how much at his funeral.

That's right. He had a funeral. Usually that wasn't how things went when one committed Seppuku. They were supposed to be forgotten, not remembered.

But Tatewaki was remembered. All of us were there. I was even surprised to see Hoppo and Cologne attend. Why Cologne attended, I had no idea at the time. But afterwards, I found out.

Cologne had come to say goodbye. Shampoo as well.

Apparently she heard from Shampoo what had happened at Jusendo, and made the decision.

Those Joketsuzoku loopholes were funny things. They creep up on you from nowhere. Apparently, if Ranma was in love with another, the Kiss of Marriage becomes completely null and void.

And so Shampoo left without another word. She went back to China.

Funny thing, though. Because we kept in contact. Shampoo would write letters. Her Japanese is improving a lot. Apparently, she plans to visit again some day.

Ukyou seemed to take the news well, too. It was apparent that she had long since accepted the fact that Ranma would have chosen me.

And all Ukyou did was smile. And nod. She's still around, surprisingly. I thought for sure that we had hurt her, but she's strong. Sometimes I see the longing gaze in her eyes as she looks at Ranma, but that's long since been gone. Since she had better things to worry about.

Her own husband.

The funny thing was, Konatsu looked good in a wedding dress.

It's a good thing Ukyou made him change, or else the Priest would have walked out right then and there.

And now they live together above the Ucchan. Man and Wife. I suppose someday they'll move to a larger place. After all, if they plan to have children some day, they should be raised in a home, not a business.

But I'm happy for them anyways. I'm also happy that though we were, in essence, competing for the affections of the same man, we remained friends through the end.

And so we were. Ukyou Kuonji was my friend. And Ranma's friend.

I still think the only reason Ranma eats there is because of the discounts he gets on meals.

Then there was Ryouga.

That is a story in and of itself. Had I known from the beginning who 'P-Chan' really was, I'd have gone haywire on him.

But when I found out, Ranma, of all people, protected him.

Protected him from me.

As I've found out, Ranma has his reasons for everything. His reason for not telling me about Ryouga was a promise. A promise that I blamed him for.

That was our first real fight. We had almost seperated after that.

But we didn't. We didn't because I realized that in the same position, I would have done exactly what he did.

My perspective of Ryouga changed after that. Before what I saw as a kind, sweet, caring and sometimes senseless individual, I saw as a pervert.

But now... I don't know. He and Akari visit often, But Ryouga still gets edgy whenever he's in the same room as me. In fact, the only time we make eye contact is when we're in the middle of a talk, with Ranma and Akari in the room too.

But I'm not mad at him anymore. My perspective of him has changed, but I'm no longer mad. I look back, and I realize while I would not have done the same thing, there were factors that were my fault completely.

When I first found him, he tried to escape. But \*I\* was the one who held him close. And then he saw me as a way to get back at Ranma.

I don't know if he actually did care for me, or it was an infatuation. Either way, I'm somewhat flattered.

And I'm proud of Ranma. For protecting his friend, no matter what he had done. No matter how much it had hurt him, he protected Ryouga.

And then, after that one event, we were married.

We could wait no longer. Everyone else was out of the way, so to speak, and it seemed the right time.

A year after Tatewaki's death, we married.

And I haven't had a regret since.

Last year, we saw Kodachi. She didn't notice us at first, but when she did, she swiftly started to move away.

It confused us at first. Kodachi, who was really so forward towards

Ranma, ran away from us.

We had ourselves a little investigation.

It didn't take us long to put two and two together, and figure things out. Nabiki had even been more than willing to help us out. She had found out of the hospital.

The hospital. Hell, she had even gotten us records.

And then our hearts went out to her. Of the torture she endured after her mothers death. Worse than I ever could have imagined after my own mothers death. And then her brothers death didn't help things at all.

Then we read about 'The Black Rose'.

We found out who she really was, and who Kodachi was.

And we did the only thing we could do. We became her friend.

And she became ours.

And then we received the news from Doctor Tofu.

I was pregnant.

Nabiki had moved out three months later, and left her room to us. We decided to turn it into a nursery.

Which left Kasumi's room.

I had since moved out of my room, and now lived in the old 'guest room' with Ranma. Ranma's father had in turn moved to Auntie Nodoka's place.

Happosai still lived downstairs.

Which left two empty bedrooms.

My old room, and Kasumi's.

So it came time to make an important decision.

It was actually my idea to invite Kodachi to live with us. She had not shown any signs of hostility since before her brother died, and living in that big house with nobody but her servants couldn't be healthy for her.

She didn't have friends at all, and Ranma and I were determined to fix that.

So we invited her into our home. Some people thought it was a mistake. That it would make her old feelings about Ranma resurface, but we weren't worried about that. I love Ranma, and he loves me. Of all things, I'm not worried about losing him to someone else.

So she moved into my old room.

And here we are, months later, driving like a bat out of hell to the

hospital.

It turned out Kodachi was as nervous as Ranma, if not more.

'Kodachi,' I said, 'I think we want to arrive at the hospital in one piece.'

Kodachi blinked, and then nodded. I had to laugh at that. She looked almost comical at the wheel, with her eyes wired open.

And within minutes, we were there.

After another minute, they determined I was in true labour, and I was already dialated by 6 centimeters.

They had to force my water to break. For some reason, it wouldn't break on it's own, and after that, it was all downhill.

It took three hours for our first child to be born. Both Ranma and Kodachi helped me through the entire thing. Ranma with his breathing, and Kodachi with her comical ramblings.

It's strange. I'd never have expected the old Kodachi to act in such a way, but this Kodachi. The real Kodachi did. And I appreciated it.

Even when she fainted, and Ranma had to wake to wake her up.

And now, both of them are beside me, looking into the eyes of the first child of the Saotome's. It was a boy.

And I know Kodachi will appreciate this.

I look at Ranma and smile. He nods his assent, and I begin to speak.

'I think he should be named after someone we remember, and miss.'

Ranma nodded. Kodachi remained silent.

'Kodachi, Ranma and I have discussed this, and we think that the boy should be named... Tatewaki.'

And Kodachi was still silent. Speechless was more like it. But when I saw the tears well up in her eyes, I knew. I knew we had made her happy, and for some reason, making Kodachi happy was as important to us as our relationship.

Three years ago, I never would have taken this much pleasure in making her happy. But now I do.

It's strange how we all go through changes.

End  
file.